N015

A Thesis
on
Leucorrhea
by
Alexander D. Crawford
of Virginia

Rejected
March 24th. 1825

Leucorrhea, or Fluor Albus, is an irregular discharge of white pellucid fluid which takes place from the Uterus and Vagina, afterwards varying its colour to a green, yellow, or brown hue, then becoming somewhat acrimonious, exciting smarting in making water; attended with pains in the back, loss of strength, palenes, languor, &c.

The sleep is disturbed and unrefreshing; the patient is dejected and disposed to melancholy.

Some writers confine the term Leucorrhea to a discharge from the inner surface of the womb; others again to a discharge from the Vagina; I am inclined to think, that it proceeds oftener from both, than otherwise.

When the discharge comes from the womb, in great quantities, it often injures that organ so much, as to affect the Menstruation, in a greater or less degree; thereby rendering the Uterus incapable of conception. However

the menses frequently continues pretty regular; and in these cases, the Leucorrhea discharge diminishes during the flow of the menses, but increase a little before and after menstruation.

It frequently happens when the menses are obstructed, that the Fluor Albus becomes more abundant, and be attended with more pain in the back, about the monthly period. Fluor Albus may occur in two different states of the constitution, These are, a state of plethora, and a state of debility. The first is marked by a full habit, and a good complexion. The second, by a pale countenance, a sallow surface, and a feeble pulse. The discharge in some cases may be mixed with a little blood from the uterine vessels, if there be a tendency to menorrhagia, but not otherwise, unlesp there be organic disease of the parts. We must bear in mind that Leucorrhea

may be caused by local irritation, including organic disease; by a state of increased vascular action; or any thing which weakens the action of the Uterus; such as frequent miscarriag, immoderate venery, sedentary habits, poor diet, &c. Leucorrhea is nearly always accompanied with pain, and a sense of weakness in the back. The functions of the digestive organs are general more or less injured. It has been stated by some writers that this disease may be produced by the presence of polypus in utero; worms may also produce it; but such cases, will not be considered here.

In treating of Fluor Albus, we should first consider whether it be symptomatic, or idiopathic; should it not be symptomatic, we should attend to the state of the constitution. If the patient be plethoric, or robust, it will generally be found necessary, to diminish the activity of the vessels, by mild purgatives, spare diet, and in many cases, we will find it necessary to use the Lancet. Regular

exercise is, in this view, of benefit, but in all cases, fatigue should be avoided. We should give tonic medicines with the view, of improving the tone of the stomach; the patient should take cordials, cold bath, when this disease is attended with great debility.

We should also employ injections, commencing with those of a mild nature, such Sac: Saturni; Sulph: Zinc &c, after employing these for a short time, we must substitute stronger ones in their places. I have found the Black Wash, very useful after using the milder injections. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think, with those who believe that in cases, where there exists great plethora, that astringent injection, are hurtfull, in the early stage, and may dispose the Uterus to a diseased state.

If the debility be great, which is seldom the case, in the commencement, the injections should then consist of alumine in solution, or a strong decoction of oak bark. The parts should also be kept

clean, by frequent washing the parts; exposure to cold, or damp air, should be strictly avoid.

Emetics on account of their operation on the stomach and alimentary canal, are advised by some writers, in cases where much plethora exists, I do not think emetics can be of much service; purgatives in such instances, would be of more utility, they however, should be given only, with the view, of keeping the bowels regular, for bright and repeated purging is hurtfull.

Of the internal remedies, the Tincture of Kino, seems to have been used by some practitioners with success; medicines have been given with the view of acting on the secreting vessels, such as Cicuta, Diuretic salts, calomel, Canthanides, Oil of Turpentine, &c. From the experience that I have had in the above remedies, I do not hesitate to say, that the Canthanides

is far the best; from the trials that I have made of this, I am induced to give it the preference to all other internal remedies; the Tincture is general given in the dose of 10 or 15 drops 3 times a day; it may be dropt in a little water, or on a little sugar. Opiates, has also been found very useful when this disease is attended with much pain in the back, and when there is great restlessness.

When the discharge is very opake, and attended with great pain and restlessness, we have some reason to think that the cervix uteri is in a state of irritation; and by examination it will be found, tender to the touch, and the mouth of the uterus soft, and somewhat enlarged. It is to be managed in the first stage, by warm hip baths, mild mucunial laxatives, irritation must be avoided. After the tenderness is pretty much relieved, the cold bath, Tonics, and mild vegitable astringents injections, are proper. On the whole then,

our practice in Leucorrhœa, when it is not dependant on organic affections, consists in rectifying the constitution, making it as healthy as we can, by the mode above advised, and avoiding as much as possible all initating, and exciting causes.